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Date Event

Happy Holidays!

Jan 17	SLMD Winter Retreat- Belgrade
Jan 23	NRIS Seminar-Helena
Feb 11-14	Offline 2004-Glasgow
Feb 21	MSL Commission Meeting-Chico
Mar 20-21	Broad Valleys Library Federation Retreat- Chico

BIG SKY LIBRARIES

Number 85

December, 2003/January, 2004

State Receives Librarian Education Recruitment Grant

Scholarship Applications Due March 26, 2004

The Montana State Library received notice recently that it was selected for a \$206,167 "Recruiting and Educating Librarians for the 21st Century" award from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

The three-year grant will fund a statewide promotion/recruitment campaign designed to attract Montana residents to the library profession, with an emphasis on recruiting more Native American librarians. Six Montana residents will receive scholarships to attend graduate library school and will be required to work in a Montana public, school, or tribal library for a minimum of two years following the program. Stipends will also be awarded to help libraries bring these new graduates into their communities.

Karen Strege, State Librarian, said, "We are excited to be given the opportunity to help six Montana residents become trained as librarians to work in our state. In a world that's information rich, librarians are information smart. Finding just the right answer to each patron's question is something we take great pride in doing."

Montana's State Library was one of 27 successful grant applicants, three of which are State libraries. MSL formed a ten-member advisory committee [see sidebar] to provide guidance with the recruitment campaign and application process. The committee met for the first time on December 2 in Helena.

Visit the MSL website at www.msl.state.mt.us to download a copy of the scholarship application. All applications must be postmarked by March 26, 2004; advisory committee members will begin the application review process the first week of April. It is anticipated that selected applicants will begin school in the fall of 2004.

A public awareness campaign to inform interested Montanans about the scholarships and stipends is also scheduled to begin soon.

For more information about Montana's grant, contact Sue Jackson, MSL Federal Grants/ Continuing Education Consultant at (406) 444-5350 or at sujackson@state.mt.us.

Professional Education and Employment for Librarians (PEEL) Advisory Committee members:

- ✧ Dale Alger, public libraries representative, *Roundup*
- ✧ Caroline Bitz, Montana State Library Commissioner, *Box Elder*
- ✧ Mary Bushing, library educator, *Bozeman*
- ✧ John Finn, Montana Library Association President, *Great Falls*
- ✧ Michael Hall, Office of Public Instruction, *Helena*
- ✧ John Meckler, school libraries representative, *Plains*
- ✧ Anita Scheetz, tribal college libraries representative, *Poplar*
- ✧ Mike Schulz, academic libraries representative, *Dillon*
- ✧ Ellen Swaney, Director of American Indian/Minority Achievement, Office of the Commission of Higher Education, *Helena*
- ✧ Karen Strege, Montana State Librarian, ex-officio member, *Helena*



Karen Strege, Ph.D.

A Message from the State Librarian

By Karen Strege

I hope that the past year brought you much success and joy in your life. For the State Library, 2003

began with the enormous challenge of understanding and accommodating the state's fiscal difficulties, and ended with significant good news. I think that the good and not-so-good news of this year will have lasting effects on MSL and its users.

For example, part of our response to the challenge of diminished dollars was to combine our Library and Information Services Department (LISD) with our Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) into the Montana State digital Library (MSdL). The results of this consolidation have yet to be realized. We are striving to increase the understanding between the two groups and to create opportunities for collaborative projects. Although the MSdL is only in its formative stages, I predict that this development will have a long-term positive impact for our clients.

Other developments that have the potential to benefit the future of libraries are two grant-funded projects, which are covered in this newsletter. Can anyone doubt that the addition of six newly trained librarians will change library services in Montana? We all know that a new staff member with initiative, creativity, and enthusiasm can make a positive difference in our own institutions and to our clients. Not only will the six scholarship winners bring the potential for meaningful change to

their workplaces, but they will also certainly bring new life to our professional associations and endeavors.

The Gates Foundation continues its philanthropy to Montana public libraries. While still in the planning stages, this newest award will allow Montana's poorest public libraries to upgrade hardware and software and improve connectivity so all Montana residents can access the wealth of information available on-line. Again, Gates assistance will place local libraries in a position of relevancy to their communities and increase the sustainability of the library as a community and education center.

On behalf of the Montana State Library staff and Commission, have a very happy holiday season and thank you for your support of the agency during the past year.



NRIS Announces Web User Survey Results

By Anastasia Burton, MSL Communications & Marketing Coordinator

The Montana Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) recently announced the results of its second annual web user survey, which was conducted on the NRIS website from mid-September through October.

The survey was designed to help NRIS evaluate its services. Over 34% of those who took the survey primarily represented the private sector, with the remainder representing government agencies. About 70% of respondents said they visit the NRIS website several times per month or more often; over 87% said NRIS services were essential or valuable to their business, agency, or personal needs. One survey respondent wrote, "NRIS is truly a gem within state government and fills a very necessary, yet fairly unique role in disseminating digital information. I have often heard people from other states lamenting that they don't have something like NRIS."

An overwhelming number of respondents (73%) said they primarily use NRIS web-based services, an increase of 5% over last year's survey results. NRIS Director Jim Hill said, "We're really pleased that people find our website to be such a valuable resource. This finding shows it's been useful for us to devote the major part of our resources toward serving our data through the Internet. People have

access to a wealth of data any time, any where ~ all they need is Internet access."

Survey results revealed planning as the primary reason respondents use NRIS information, followed by research, resource management, and conservation. About two-thirds of users download geographic information system (GIS) data, such as stream and road information, which enables them to make their own customized maps.

NRIS responds to thousands of inquiries each month via its website. During the months of September and October, when the survey ran, NRIS' web site served over 124,000 visitor sessions, which lasted approximately 12 minutes each. That translates to about 406 person-hours each day spent on the NRIS site.

Visitors to nris.state.mt.us will find a variety of data, reports, maps, and tools for searching and displaying information. These items help inform users about important issues facing Montanans, including: drought, wildfires, water quality, and plants/animals of concern. Website users can also learn more about fishing opportunities, bird watching, and wildlife management.

The survey results can be viewed by visiting <http://nris.state.mt.us/survey/2003/>.

On November 19, Montana's Natural Resource and Information System (NRIS) hosted a variety of GIS Day events. GIS Day is an international celebration which highlights the importance of geography and maps in our everyday lives.

Forty fifth-grade students from Smith Elementary School in Helena visited MSL to take part in presentations by GIS professionals from NRIS, the Montana Census and Economic Information Center, and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. In this photo, Kris Larson, GIS Programmer/Analyst with the Montana CEIC, rewards a correct answer with candy at her "Census and GIS" presentation.

Visit <http://www.gisday.com/success.html> for more event information and photos.



Photo by Anastasia Burton

Talking Book Library Joins Digital Study

By Christie Briggs, MTBL Supervisor

Montana's Talking Book Library, along with similar libraries in Illinois, Hawaii, Mississippi, and New Jersey, is participating in the "Lobe Library" digital book project. Coordinated by the Illinois State Library, the project's goals are to develop, conduct, and evaluate a one-year, multi-state beta test that provides a wide variety of digital audio book (audible e-book) content and services to visually impaired and physically challenged library users.

The one-year project offers four Otis digital players, which are small mp3 playback devices to TBL users. The user selects three books to load on the players and the player, with the books, is sent to each patron for two weeks. Each user of the services is asked to fill

out an evaluation of the player and the service.

The states in the Lobe library project hope that this study will be of value to the National Library Service, which provides all Talking Book Libraries with books and playback machines, as it develops plans for a digital players and books. Karen Strege, State Librarian, said, "We think it is important to stay abreast of new technologies for all of our services. Offering books in this format to interested readers is just the beginning of using new ways to provide high quality service to our readers."

For more information, visit the web site at <http://www.lobelibrary.org> or call Christie Briggs at 1-800-332-3400 or 406-444-5399.

LISD Surveys State Employees

By Suzy Holt, Client Services Supervisor

The Library and Information Services Department (LISD) recently closed its third annual survey of state government employees, one of its major user populations. The survey was conducted over the web using the SurveyMonkey tool; notice of the survey was distributed throughout state government via email. As an enticement, respondents were offered the chance to enter their names in a drawing to win one of several new Montana books. Commissioner Al Randall drew the winning names December 10 after the MSL Commission meeting.

There were 1,424 respondents, nearly twice as many as last year's 776. Returns came in from employees of 24 state agencies, with 34% coming from those working outside of Helena; both library users and non-users were well represented. 82% of respondents represented employees in management, professional, technical, and research positions.

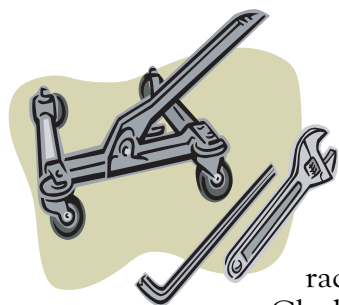
Among other things, library users were asked to indicate which of the services and resources are most important to them, and how satisfied they are with each of them. Those responses will identify areas of highest importance that have the lowest satisfaction score and will be a guide for priority attention in 2004.

Questions specific to non-users were included to explore reasons for not using the library and to solicit suggestions on how the State Library might be helpful. More than half indicated they didn't realize the library might have resources useful to them, and most of the 299 written responses suggest more outreach and publicity about services is critical.

A comprehensive analysis of the results will be assisted by library consultant Mary Bushing as part of her formal evaluation of LISD and reported to the MSL Commission in February.

Auto Repair Reference Center Added to Statewide Magazine Databases

By Bruce Newell, MSL Montana Library Network Manager



For many of us, the airwaves just don't get any better than the Car Guys on National Public Radio. Sad, isn't it? Master mechanics and raconteurs Click and Clack, a.k.a. Tom and Ray Magliozzi, recommend that we shade-tree mechanics consider three factors before we crawl under the hood:

- ✧ How dangerous is the repair, before, during, and after the job's done?
- ✧ How likely are we to break things that aren't broken, or completely destroy our vehicle in the process?
- ✧ How complex is the repair? To do the job right, do we need a PhD in Electrical Engineering and a \$1,500 set of left-handed monkey wrenches?

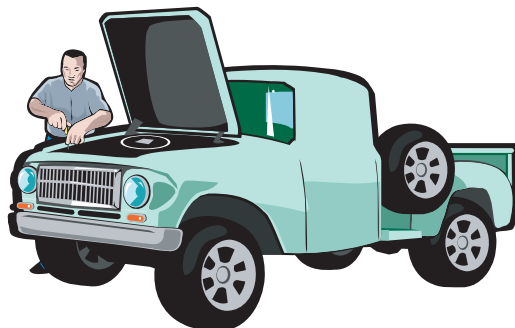
Montana libraries can now offer their users the tools to keep mechanical mavens on the straight and narrow. As of today, EBSCO's Auto Repair Reference Center (ARRC) is included in our statewide database subscription (along with the Gale/InfoTrac databases), and at no extra charge! The ARRC is a great tool that can help us decide if we should attempt that car repair or just take it into the shop. EBSCO's product, which mirrors a Chilton automotive repair manual series, gives us the information we need, boasting:

- ✧ Domestic and foreign makes of cars/trucks as far back as 1954
- ✧ More than 150 illustrated auto repair manuals on all repair procedures
- ✧ Over 23,000 different year, make and model combinations

- ✧ More than 60,000 Technical Service Bulletins from 1987 to present
- ✧ Wiring diagrams in PDF for easy viewing and printing
- ✧ Labor time estimates for various repairs
- ✧ Maintenance schedules and specifications charts
- ✧ Text and many images in PDF and GIF format
- ✧ Over 100,000 factory drawings and step by step photographs

You can check it out at
<http://trial.epnet.com>

User ID: "mln"
Password: "auto"



All Montanans are encouraged to visit this free trial site between now and February. In February, access will be limited to patrons from Montana libraries subscribing to the statewide database project (which now includes Gale's InfoTrac and Ebsco's Auto Repair Reference Center).

It's not too late for Montana libraries to sign up. Go to <http://161.7.137.31/MLNdbEnroll2003.htm> to enroll in this great two-year deal. ARRC training has yet to be scheduled, but we're anticipating EBSCO statewide training during February or March.

Montana Receives Gates Foundation Staying Connected Grant

By Sue Jackson, MSL Federal Grants/Continuing Education Consultant

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently notified Montana State Library that Montana will receive \$198,720 from the Foundation's Staying Connected Grant Program. The money will be used to help public libraries purchase new public access computer equipment and fund Internet connectivity upgrades. The grant will also fund training for public library staff on ways to improve and increase public access computing in their communities.

All public libraries and branches will be eligible to apply for Staying Connected funds to upgrade equipment and/or connectivity. The application

process will probably begin in March. Information about the grants will be available through a mailing to all public libraries in Montana and messages posted on Wired-Mt. The Networking Task Force, which has provided the State Library with direction and evaluation of library services and training for the past six years, will be involved in the screening of grant applications and selection of grant awards.

For more information about the grant, please contact Sue Jackson (sujackson@state.mt.us or 1-800-338-5087) at MSL.



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